

APPROVED 8/5/03

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

Wednesday, July 2, 2003 – 8:00 a.m.

**6th Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building**

Minutes

Commission Members Present:

Kenneth Muir, Chair
Barbara Smith Hawk, Vice Chair
Robert Skelton
Randy Scritchfield
Julie Davis
Shelton Skolnick
Javier Miyares
Michael McKeehan
Cheryl Kagan
Mollie Habermeier

Commission Members Absent:

Sylvia Brown Olivetti

Staff:

Sonya Healy, Legislative Analyst
Carol Edwards, Legislative Services Coordinator

Justina Ferber, Legislative Analyst
Marc Hansen, Chief, Division of General Counsel,
Office of the County Attorney
William Mooney, Assistant Chief
Administrative Officer

Guests:

Dale Tibbits, Montgomery County Civic
Federation
Howard Philips, Committee Evaluation and
Review Board

Opening Remarks

Chairman Muir opened the meeting by welcoming the Commission Members, Council Staff and County Executive Staff. Mr. Muir presented a brief background/summary of the Charter Review Commission and its purpose, and asked everyone to give a brief introduction.

Chairman Muir introduced Howard Philips from the County's Committee Evaluation and Review Board. Mr. Philips stated that the Committee Evaluation Review Board (CERB) is another Montgomery County Board that comes into existence every 10 years to review all of the other existing boards, commissions, and committees. The CERB looks at things like training, compensation, and staffing. The CERB prepares a report for the County Executive and the County Council on its recommendations. The report is a two-year study, and the CERB just finished the first year of the study. The CERB prepared an interim report which was submitted to the County Executive and the County Council last month. Mr. Philips will forward it to Sonya Healy for the Commission to see what was accomplished over the past year. The CERB is looking into improving the existing board and committee structure in Montgomery County. The CERB seeks any advice the Commission can give them to improve the Charter Review Commission itself. A follow-up report will be issued next year to inform the Commission of the Board's recommendation to the County Council and County Executive about improving the system.

Shelton Skolnick asked whether the CERB's work could lead to Charter changes. Ms. Ferber responded that the Commission is established in the Charter. The Charter states how the Commission is appointed – no more than 6 members from one party, 6 members appointed by the Council and 5 by the County Executive. The Commission reports to the Council every two years. If the CERB were to recommend a change in that procedure, then it would be a Charter change for the Commission to consider.

Mission of the Charter Review Commission

Sonya Healy described staff's role which is basically to facilitate decision making, provide background information on issues that come up, and conduct research. In general, issues have come up through meetings with the County Executive, Councilmembers and also through the public. Last year, the Commission held 3 public forums in different areas of the County to obtain public input on ideas which the public felt were important for the Commission to review. The Commission reviewed these issues and decided which ones they wanted to pursue.

Justina Ferber, Council Staff, briefed the new Commission members on the history of previous Charter Review Commissions. Many years ago the County Council and the Executive appointed an ad hoc Commission and directed the work program. Eventually the Charter Review Commission was established in the Charter. The Commission no longer receives instructions from the Council; however, the Commission meets with elected officials to obtain their ideas and recommendations (she suggested that this take place in September or October). She advised that the Commission seek public comments through a press release requesting input on Charter changes.

Ms. Ferber also highlighted the following:

- Commission's report is due by May 1, 2004
- Consider having 2-3 people to do specific tasks and research in specific topics
- Review Executive and Council issues/proposals
- Review public issues
- Commission may want to take a position on a petition amendment
- Council can add an amendment on the ballot
- Commission voting – done by simple majority
- Advertise for comments through press releases

Commission Report

The Chair and Staff discussed the timeline as stated in the agenda for drafting the Commission's final report.

Chairman Muir asked if members had any issues that they would want to review as part of the Commission's recommendations. It was suggested that the Commission look at issues raised in the previous Commission's report. Previous Commissions had discussed the structure

of County Government and whether it is appropriate today. The last Commission also discussed improving electronic communication. The Chair suggested that the Commission discuss these issues. Chairman Muir asked if the Commission was interested in scheduling a meeting to discuss issues raised in the previous report. Members agreed.

Ms. Ferber asked Commission members to give the Chair permission to write a letter to the Council to inform them that the Commission had started its work and to express its desire to meet with Councilmembers and the County Executive at a meeting in August or September. Ms. Ferber suggested that letters should be mailed to agencies (e.g. Superintendent of Schools and Department Heads). It was suggested that a copy of the Charter be included with the letter, and that the letter be sent to other boards, committees, and the Office of the Inspector General.

Dale Tibbits, asked about public outreach. Ms. Ferber stated that outreach would be done by press release for public comment and eventually through a link on the Council's website.

Julie Davis requested that copies of the Redistricting Task Force report be made available to the Commission.

Administrative Items

Chairman Muir suggested that the Commission set specific meeting dates and times for future meetings. Members agreed to meet on the first Thursday of every month at 8:00 a.m. On August 5, the Commission will meet to review the previous Charter Review Commission report. The Civic Federation proposal should also be available for review at this meeting.

Council Staff will provide speaker phone communication for members who cannot physically attend meetings if desired. Information will be distributed electronically.

Ms. Davis asked Council Staff to mail the Redistricting Commission's report before the August meeting. Mr. Muir asked if it would be possible for the Civic Federation proposal to make its report available to the Commission before the next meeting.

Ms. Hawk asked for an updated County Government organizational chart.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 a.m.